

This tomato is a true garden treasure

■ Garden Treasure tomato variety is part of a woman's effort to encourage youth to grow food

Norman Winter
Tribune News Service

Two Garden Treasures have come together for a magnificent purpose and that is getting food to those who need it most. It is a story that is still being written and one that will tug at gardeners' hearts across the country.

The first Garden Treasure is so aptly named. It is a tomato out of the University of Florida breeding line. It checks off every mark a gardener could ever want. It is a medium sized slicer perfect for some off-the-grill hamburgers.

It has the taste of an heirloom. This is the taste that makes you think this is what eating a fresh tomato is all about. It is the taste that will change a young person's palette from being squeamish on a tomato to being passionately in love with this fruit of the vine.

Every year horticulturists like myself get bombarded with questions about what is wrong with my tomatoes. I am sure the frustration is so severe that many were asking could my tomatoes get COVID. I am joking and the answer to that is NO. But Garden Treasure is packed with modern day disease resistance.

This University of Florida breeding program did something else and that is give it heat resistance. If you have grown tomatoes, you have become keenly aware that once nighttime temperatures hit 72 degrees, pollination stops and many varieties shut down until temperatures moderate. Usually this means pulling and planting a fall crop later.

Garden Treasure is an indeterminate variety. This



Norman Winter/TNS

Harvesting your own Garden Treasure tomato is a lasting memory.

means it will keep growing and producing and since it has this heat tolerance you will be harvesting long into the season. It also means you will be using your favorite method of caging, or staking and tying.

This tomato is so good, as is its smaller cousin the semi-de-

terminate Garden Gem, that this enticed Proven Winners to make them the cornerstone of the Proven Harvest section of their award-winning plants. Yes, Garden Treasure has won oodles of awards and the ones you care about.

The awards include Top Performer University of

Georgia, Leader of the Pack All Season JC Raulston Arboretum, Top Performer Penn State, Perfect Score All Season Oregon State University and the list goes on. A Garden Treasure indeed, and if you are wondering, Garden Gem has also racked up the awards

The second Garden Treasure is Katie Stagliano from Summerville, South Carolina, the founder and chief executive gardener of Katie's Krops. It is hard to imagine she is only 22 and yet she is behind the organization's mission to empower youth to start and maintain vegetable gardens of all sizes, donating the harvest to feed people in need. This magnificent passion and purpose of heart began when Katie was 9 years old and grew a 40-pound cabbage.

Katie's Krops now has 100 gardens across the country, and yes, she too touts the wonderful production and award-winning performance of Garden Treasure and Garden Gem. Katie not only works at donating the tasty produce but also uses them in prepared meals that are likewise given away. One of her favorites is a salad where she also incorporates the Proven Winners award-winning sweet Italian basil called Amazel Basil.

This basil which alludes to being amazing, actually is, because it just keeps producing. Katie said that while other basil bolts or go to flower, this one simply keeps you in the harvest. She said Garden Treasure and Garden Gem tomatoes are used with Amazel Basil in an incredible pasta with marinara sauce in donated meals. If you would like to explore ways to be a part of Katie's Krops, go to katie-krops.com

Search out both transplants or seeds at provenwinners.com. The Garden Guy is so looking forward to spring and that first tomato of the season. Here is hoping you get plants or seeds and have a bountiful summer too.

Genius snack

Kate Krader
Bloomberg News

Ovenly's cookbook contains a genius at-home bar snack recipe that's perfect for Netflix binges and sporting events.

A year ago, who would have predicted that sales of yeast and lobster would skyrocket while on-the-go foods like nutrition bars would tank. Another, less talked about beneficiary of pandemic-related lockdowns has been cookbooks. Print sales rose 15% for the first three-quarters of 2020, compared to 2019. No surprise, bread cookbooks led the way; sales were up 145% over the same time period, according to data from the NPD Group.

Cult favorite Brooklyn bakery Ovenly has taken advantage of that renewed obsession with a new edition of their 2014 tome "Ovenly: Sweet and Salty Recipes From New York's Most Creative Bakery" (Park Row Books; \$24). The book went through three printings and then disappeared.

"During quarantine when everyone amped up their baking, no one could find our cookbook," says Ovenly co-founder Agatha Kulaga. "Prices of used copies were going through the roof." In response, she and fellow founder Erin Patinkin put out an updated version in early January, including new recipes.

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WASTE

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One way to reduce waste is simply to use up all those things that are languishing on our Frigidaire's death row. You know them: little lugs of leftovers you can't believe nobody finished. The half a bowl of peas, the container of converted rice or the chunk of boneless pork roast. Like it would kill you to have one more bite of pork?

Here's what you do: Think of dishes that feature small amounts of several ingredients. Fried rice. Soup. Stir-fried noodles. If you don't know where to start, use any random recipe as your guide: Pay attention to the method, but swap out the printed ingredients for the leftovers in your fridge.

For example, if that fried rice recipe calls for a head of broccoli and sushi rice, just use those leftover peas along with the converted rice (or basmati rice or quinoa, if that's what you've got). Don't worry about exact amounts. Remember this: Recipes are written by humans whose tastes undoubtedly differ from yours. Amounts don't necessarily need to be exact and similar ingredients — like vegetables or meats — often can be substituted for one another.

You can apply the same principles to noodles. Or pizza. Or soup.

Think of a bowl of soup. Handfuls of randomized vegetables, floating in flavorful broth. Imagine making your own vegetable soup, or pork and vegetable, or chicken and vegetable. Start with canned broth,

then add whatever is lurking in the fridge. If there's not enough, throw in a can of beans from the cupboard.

And speaking of soup, here's another general principle to go with "Use Up the Stuff in Your Fridge": Consider using things that you otherwise might throw out.

Lately, I've been making lots of roasted broccoli. (Toss a pound or two of broccoli florets with some olive oil, dust it with salt, minced or powdered garlic and some hot red pepper flakes and throw it single-layered into a 425-degree oven for 20-ish minutes, turning once.) It's a delicious side, but uses only the florets, not the stems.

Enter cream of broccoli soup: Sweat the chopped stems in a little butter with some onion and celery, then add flour to make a roux. Pour in stock (1 to 2 quarts per pound of stems), simmer, puree, add cream, season, and blammo: soup. You could add cheese, too, in case the cream alone doesn't justify your dependence on Lipitor.

You can do the same thing with cauliflower (see recipe), although the ratio of stems to florets is somewhat smaller than for broccoli. Still, serve cauliflower twice in one week and you'll probably have enough stem for a lovely little cauliflower and cholesterol soup.

Every time you cook, ask yourself if something you're discarding couldn't be used for something else. Like the liquid you used to poach your sausages. (Use it as a base for sauces or just reduce it, season it and drink it hot like a beast.)

Or, if you're making shrimp, save

the shells in the freezer, then use them later to make shrimp stock for bisque or gumbo.

Or, if you've purchased a chicken, instead of roasting it whole, maybe take the meat from the bones beforehand and use the carcass for stock. Or kick it old school and grind the skin and make gribbens (cracklings with fried onions). Or just remove the skin whole and make an umbrella for your rhesus monkey. It's cheaper than those bespoke monkey raincoats you've been buying at Not Just Chimp Pants.

Here's a personal favorite: You know the brown bits stuck to the bottom of the pan after your roast or pan sear meat? Lots of people use them for instant pan sauces, but here's what I do (and if this revelation cuts down severely on the number of people who accept my dinner invitations, well, that's more mackerel casserole for me): I scrape it into a jar and save it for later. If the brown bits are really stuck to the pan, I'll deglaze it first: Crank the heat beneath the pan and dump in a water-based liquid like stock, wine, beer or even water. Bring it to a boil while scraping up the brown bits and reduce the liquid to a sad-looking syrup. Done.

Deglazed or not, keep it all in a jar, like Eleanor Rigby's face, only don't keep it by the door; store it in the fridge. The yummy gelatinous goo will settle to the bottom and be protected from spoilage by the threatening layer of congealed fat overlaying the top — like that French dish, confit, where meat is

cooked and kept submerged in its own fat.

You can use the fat for sauteing or just discard it. Then, use that lovely gelatinous goo as you would a concentrated sauce base: Heat it till it melts, then strain out any bits that remain from its original and literal incarnation. Taste it. If it's too strong (a distinct possibility, particularly if the dish from which it came originally was highly spiced or seasoned), add a bit of broth to calm it down, then thicken it with a cornstarch slurry, enrich it with a bit of whole butter, and blammo: an instant, delicious sauce.

Everybody got it? Next month, we'll discuss what to do with cereal dust.

CHEESY CREAM OF CAULIFLOWER SOUP

Prep: 20 minutes

Cook: 30 minutes

Makes: 12 cup

You can make this soup with just the stems or with the whole head, leaves included. Don't worry about exact measurements. For my money, the two most important things are seasoning and consistency, both of which you control after pureeing. Cut down on prep and cooking time by pulsing cauliflower in a food processor along with onion and celery into small, gravelly pieces.

1 stick (8 tablespoons) unsalted butter
1/2 large onion, cut into medium dice
2 ribs celery, cut into medium dice

1 1/2 pounds cauliflower, roughly chopped
1/2 cup flour
2 quarts chicken broth, plus more as needed
1/2 to 1 pound grated sharp cheddar Salt, white pepper and red pepper flakes, as needed
1/2 cup heavy cream, heated to near boiling on stovetop or in microwave

1. Melt butter in a large, heavy-bottomed saucepan over medium-high heat. Add onions, celery and cauliflower; cook, stirring, until onions are translucent, 3 to 5 minutes.
2. Stir in flour to form a roux.

Continue cooking, stirring, to get rid of the floury flavor, 3 to 4 minutes.

3. Increase heat and stir in chicken broth. Heat to a boil, stirring and scraping bottom. Then reduce heat and simmer until vegetables are tender, 10 to 15 minutes. Continue stirring and scraping the bottom every couple minutes to prevent sticking and scorching.

4. Remove from heat; carefully puree in batches in a blender. Return soup to a clean pot; place over medium-high heat to rewarm.

5. Stir in cheese until incorporated. Stir in hot cream.

7. Add salt and white pepper as needed; garnish with red pepper flakes. Serve immediately.

Nutrition information per 1 cup serving: 229 calories, 18 g fat, 11 g saturated fat, 48 mg cholesterol, 9 g carbohydrates, 1 g sugar, 9 g protein, 186 mg sodium, 1 g fiber

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